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South Tyrol – An economic or political success story?

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1. Introduction

It is a well-known and plausible thesis that social conflicts in general and ethnic tensions in particular are correlated to the economic situation of a society: As long as there is strong economic growth, all groups can improve their situation without the necessity of re-distribution and the corresponding fights between social groups. In the case of South Tyrol, this thesis seems quite evident: During the Fifties and Sixties of the last century, the economic situation was not good – forcing many German-speaking young people to emigrate to foreign (mostly German-speaking) countries (Widmann 1998). Since the Nineties, however, South Tyrol is among the most prosperous provinces not only of Italy, but of the whole European Union. Corresponding to this, ethnic tensions were at their height in the Sixties, and have decreased since that time so that today it can be said that this conflict has more or less been solved. Today, South Tyrol is considered as a positive example of the successful solution of an ethnic conflict. From the viewpoint of many other violent ethnic-national conflicts, which persist even in Western Europe since decades, this is a remarkable achievement.

Yet, I would like to argue in this contribution, that the thesis of a determination of ethnic and national conflicts by the economic situation alone would be too simple. This has already been proven for violent class conflicts which are even more directly concerned about economic growth and redistribution: Often in history the most strong conflicts and even revolutions broke out not in phases of economic stagnation or decline but in phases of growth and prosperity. It is also a matter of fact that ethnic and national movements often develop most forcefully in those regions of a country which are rather well-developed and privileged; Yugoslavia was only the last historical example proving this fact. The initiators of its dissolution were the well-off republics Slovenia and Croatia, but not the poor republics and provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia or Kosovo. Thus, there must exist also other important determinants of ethnic-national tensions besides of economic decline and deprivation of an ethnic-national group or region. Here, I will try to show that they in fact have played a significant role in the case of South Tyrol.

Let me first develop some concrete hypotheses in this regard. These hypotheses refers to the economic, social, cultural and political determinants of ethnic-national conflicts; the last, more general hypothesis, however, concerns the

long-term relationships between ethnic-national tensions, economic growth and societal development.

2. Five hypotheses on determinants of ethnic and national tensions and conflicts

The following four hypotheses refer to the determinants of ethnic-national tensions. As suggested before, I start from the assumption that not only economic, but also social, cultural and political factors play a decisive role here.

Let us begin with the thesis discussed before, that ethnic-national conflicts will be closely related to the degree of economic prosperity of an ethnic group or a region. This hypothesis states:

Hypothesis 1a:

The general positive socioeconomic situation and development of an ethnic-national group and of the region it inhabits will weaken ethnic tensions and contribute to a peaceful coexistence of the different ethnic groups.

What is at issue in most ethnic-national conflicts, however, is not only the overall economic situation of the region but the relative socioeconomic position of the different ethnic groups. The American sociologist Peter M. Blau (1977; see also Haller 1999: 187ff.) has developed a few simple, but powerful sociological concepts which can be used to explain how social differentiation is related to relations between different social groups. He distinguishes between two kinds of differentiation: *horizontal differentiation* exists, if two groups distinguish themselves from each other by their kind of work or other criteria, but without a ranking order; *vertical differentiation* exists, if such an order or hierarchy between the groups exists. The differentiation between physicians and lawyers is example of the first kind, that between physicians and nurses an example of the second kind. Overall peaceful and productive societal integration is best secured, if a society is differentiated in a manifold way, that is, if the different forms of social differentiation – gender differentiation, occupational differentiation, ethnic differentiation and so forth – do not coincide but are relatively independent of each other; this situation is called *multiform heterogeneity*. If the different social groups in a society are distinguished from each other not only in horizontal terms, but if these differences coincide with differences in occupational privileges, income, political influence and so forth, a situation of a *consolidated social structure* obtains. This means, that a group is distinguished from other groups not only by one, but by several criteria, some of which indicate a clear situation of discrimination or privilege. Such was the case in former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, and it contributed strongly to the down-break of these multinational states. The Slovenes and Croats were distinguished from the peoples of the other Yugoslav republics not only in terms of ethnic origin and religion and – as in Slovenia – also of language, but also in terms of the productivity of their economies, the mean income, and political influence. Contrary

to this explosive situation of a consolidated social structure, we can observe a situation of multiform heterogeneity in Switzerland, where political borders between the cantons, and the membership in different religious denominations, language groups etc. do not coincide.

Using these concepts, we can formulate the following hypothesis for the case of South Tyrol:

Hypothesis 1b:

Ethnic-national tensions in South Tyrol became most intense and acute in a period when there was a tendency toward a consolidated socio-economic structure, and these tensions were weakening when a heterogeneous social structure began to develop, including a complex situation of privilege and discrimination of the different groups. Tensions became particularly intense in the periods when the transition from one situation to the other was clearly felt by the population.

A second set of factors relevant for peaceful or conflict-ridden relationships between different ethnic groups refers to social factors proper. Here, I start from the assumption that in any ethnic-national conflict, the issue of **social recognition by others** plays a crucial role. Often, it is not pure economic interests which lie behind long-range and embittered conflicts and fights, but the feeling of a group that it is not recognized in its self-worth adequately by the others. This feeling, evidently, presupposes that a group possesses a relatively clear self-concept or identity. On this background, experienced trade union leaders can say that no labour fight has been for nothing; if it did not achieve to the goals aimed at, it did in any case lead toward a strengthening of the feeling of belonging together, of „class consciousness“ of the workers. The extreme form of negation of the identity of a minority group occurs if the dominant groups denies his right of existence. But also less extreme forms, such as its more or less open deprivation of fundamental economic, social and political rights, are significant.

Concerning the case of South Tyrol, we can formulate the following hypothesis in this regard:

Hypothesis 2a:

Ethnic tensions in South Tyrol were most intense in periods when the fundamental social, economic and cultural rights of the population were not recognized by the majority, in this case the state of Italy. This was the case during the period of fascism (1922–1943), but – to a lesser degree – also in the first decade after Second World War. (In the first period, the conflicts could not break out openly due the totalitarian political system). In the decades since the early Seventies a significant improvement in this regard took place, as far as the recognition of the German and Rätoroman linguistic groups is concerned. The situation of the Italian speaking group, however, was more difficult from the beginning due a lack of identity of this group given its heterogeneous composition in terms of regional origin. It became even worse in the course of the Sixties and Seventies when the granting of political autonomy to South Tyrol brought them into a situation of a minority within the province.

There is a further factor which, in my opinion, is highly relevant for the forms how ethnic relations are developing in a region, namely the **role of individual political personalities**. It is usually argued that the role of individuals is a topic to be considered only by biographers, historians and "idiographic sciences" in general, but not by the social sciences which should focus instead on structural determinants of events. This is a grave error, in my opinion. By neglecting the decisive role which outstanding individual personalities can play in history, the social sciences neglect one of the most significant factors (Haller 1996). I would argue that if a personality like Slobodan Milosevic would have taken over power in the Soviet Union, but one like Mikhail Gorbachev in Yugoslavia, we would have seen a bloodshed in the former country, while the latter would still exist!² The consideration of the role of individual personalities by the social sciences must, however, be carried out from a generalizing, ideal-typical point of view as it was sketched by Max Weber (see Haller 1999). We have to ask, how structural circumstances coincide, so to speak, with specific characteristics, strategies and actions of political personalities.

Out of these considerations, my next hypothesis reads as follows:

Hypothesis 2b:

Outstanding political leaders have played a decisive role in the formulation of ethnic-national concerns and in their successful and peaceful solution during the Seventies and Eighties in South Tyrol. Other political leaders, however, have also contributed significantly to the delay of the peaceful settlement of the conflict in the first postwar decades.

A further set of factors that plays a decisive role in the peaceful settlement or in the escalation of ethnic-national conflicts is related to culture. Here, two aspects are relevant: First, **the degree of cultural similarity or difference** between the ethnic groups, second, the overall **peacefulness or aggressiveness of a culture**. Among different elements, religion still lies at the core also of present-day cultures. Religion is also of outstanding importance in ethnic-national conflicts: If the conflicting groups belong to different religions, the conflict gets a kind of "transcendental aura"; it is possible to characterize all actions, even atrocities, as a divine right or even a duty to preserve one's own culture! As far as South Tyrol is concerned, the factor of religion is seldom mentioned even if it is and was in my opinion of decisive importance as well.³ This concerns both the aspect of the religious homogeneity of all ethnic subgroups, as well as the dimension of peacefulness or aggressiveness of catholicism, the dominant religion in South Tyrol. In this regard, my hypothesis states the following effects:

Hypothesis 3:

From the viewpoint of culture, the prospects for a peaceful solution of the ethnic conflict in South Tyrol have always been better than in many other situations of ethnic conflict in Europe and around the world. This was so for two reasons:

- (1) *All three ethnic-national groups in South Tyrol, and also the dominant Italian state population belong to only one religious denomination, Roman catholicism;*

the harsh working and living conditions in the Alps have favoured a rather high level of traditional religiosity among its inhabitants;

- (2) In its values and ideology concerning peacefulness or aggressiveness, Roman catholicism today can be considered as taking a middle position, as inclining more to a peaceful settlement of social conflicts than some other world religions.⁴*

A final, but equally important determinant of ethnic-national conflicts concerns the political dimension itself. Here, I suppose that the political constitution of a nation state is of decisive importance (see Haller 1992 for a more extensive treatment of this issue). The central element of the political constitution of a nation state that is relevant here concerns the **degree of centralization or decentralization of a state**; in the first case, we can speak of a centralized, in the latter of a **federal constitutional structure**. In order to grasp the relevance of this distinction for ethnic-national conflicts, we can refer again to the concepts of multiform heterogeneity versus structural consolidation developed by P. M. Blau. It is only a federal structure which allows that multiform heterogeneity develops in a state society. I have already mentioned the example of Switzerland: Here, the non-coincidence of linguistic, religious and economic differentiations makes sure, that conflicts between, say, German and French speaking, or catholic and protestant groups or cantons cannot develop, since the persons living in the German-speaking canton of Zürich, for instance, are divided in religious, socioeconomic aspects and so forth.

The effects of political centralisation on the situation of ethnic minorities have two sides. On the one side, a centralized state tries to create equal conditions of life in all parts of the country and for all societal groups. This was the great aim of one of the first nation states in the world, the French Republic after the revolution of 1789. On the other side, a centralized nation state aims also at creating a unified, homogeneous culture. This means often that ethnic minorities and their peculiarities in linguistic terms etc. are not considered as being a cultural asset, but have to be eliminated in order to create and preserve national unity. So, political centralization often creates a tension between the central state and the aim of ethnic-national minorities to preserve their specific languages and cultures.⁵

As far as South Tyrol is concerned, this issue has doubtless had a great significance. I propose the following two hypotheses in this regard:

Hypothesis 4:

- (1) The relative high level of political centralization of the constitution of the state of Italy has contributed to an intensification of ethnic-national tensions in South Tyrol up to the Seventies of the Twentieth Century; the tendency to grant more autonomy to regional sub-units since then, however, has contributed to an easing of these tensions.*
- (2) The creation of the European Union will further contribute to an easing of ethnic-national conflicts in South Tyrol, since the nation states loose some of their powers, but the overall level of the Union, as well as the level of regional units, will gain in importance and autonomy.*

These are my specific hypotheses concerning the intensification of weakening or ethnic-national tensions and conflicts in South Tyrol. Altogether, they suggest that the ethnic conflict will have been weakened in South Tyrol over the last decades. In the long term, however, we must also look at this problematic from a broader perspective. Ethnic-national conflicts, a peaceful living together of ethnic groups, are not only dependent variables, but are themselves significant determinants of developments in all other societal sectors. In a situation of protracted and violent ethnic conflict, an economy cannot flourish and the partners involved in the conflict develop new, specific interests which require a perpetuation of the conflict.⁶ Also a peaceful living together has a self-enforcing tendency: Economic actors, social groups, civic and political associations and their leaders all profit from a preservation of a stable and calculable social and political environment. In this regard, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5:

The peaceful settlement of an ethnic-national conflict deepens the trust between the different socioeconomic groups, as well as between the minority groups and the state authorities. As a consequence, economic activities can grow and develop much better than in a situation of continuing conflict. This has happened in the last decades also in South Tyrol: The peaceful settlement of the ethnic conflict has itself contributed significantly to economic growth and prosperity and to a dynamic population development in this region.

3. Socioeconomic changes and ethnic conflicts in South Tyrol, 1945–2000

There are two aspects of the socioeconomic situation and their change which are relevant for the outbreak of ethnic-national conflicts and tensions: One is the overall economic situation of a group, the other is its internal socioeconomic structure in the sense of its differentiation or consolidation. Let us discuss one after the other.

Economic development and the changing level of ethnic-national tensions

As a test of our first hypothesis – that a positive socioeconomic development leads to a decrease of ethnic-national tensions and conflicts – let us look at the development of the economic situation and the intensity of ethnic conflicts in South Tyrol since World War II. As a first approximation, a schematic overview is presented on the relationship between the two processes in **Synopsis 1**.⁷ (See also the stylized graphic summary of the relation between the two processes in Obkircher 1999, p. 159). As we can see from these overview, it is rather clear that there existed a close correlation between the development of the overall economic situation and

the intensity of ethnic-national tensions in South Tyrol. Let us discuss shortly the main phases of the time period under consideration.⁸

Synopsis 1: A schematic overview on the relations between socioeconomic development, significant political events and ethnic tensions in South Tyrol, 1945–2000

Period	Economic situation	Political events	Ethnic tensions
1945–59	Reconstruction after war Transition from agrarian to industrial society Employment crisis of and labour emigration of young, German speaking	1946 Gruber-Degasperi treaty, Paris 1947 South Tyrol autonomous, but united with Trento 1957: Sigmundskron demonstration	1956–69: First series of bomb attacks 1961 “Fire Night”
1960–84	Economic prosperity (South Tyrolean „economic miracle“)	Establishment of the commission of the 19 1972 Second autonomy statute: Province of	
1984–88	Economic crisis	Bozen/South Tyrol becomes fully autonomous 1988 L. Durnwalder head of local government	1987–88 Second stage of terrorism of bomb attacks
1990–	Economic recovery and prosperity, massive financial transfers; from the state to the province Bolzano	Establishment of the commission of the 137 Detailed autonomy regulations 1992 1992 Austrian parliament and government declare the conflict as solved	

In the aftermath of Second World War, South Tyrolean economy had to adapt to the new circumstances which meant – in the Fifties and Sixties – an accelerated transition to the industrial and post-industrial economy; as elsewhere in Central Europe, this process had been slowed down considerably by war. For Tyrol, this process involved a strong exodus from the rural villages, where birth rates were high but employment opportunities restricted and even decreasing due to the progress of

technical equipment available for farm work also in mountain rural areas and due to an increasing specialisation of the farms.⁹ Given the fact, that in South Tyrol at this time the only large-scale industry was that established by the Fascists in Bozen, and public service was nearly exclusively in the hands of the Italian-speaking population, there was a rather strong shortage of industrial (and service) working places so that about 7.000 young German speaking youth from rural areas had to emigrate; most of them emigrated to the adjacent German speaking countries, Austria, Germany and Switzerland.¹⁰ At the same time, post-fascist Italy continued the policy of settling immigrant Italian workers in Bolzano, by enlarging the heavy industrial plants in Bozen and by providing publicly financed apartments for their workers recruited from other Italian provinces (Widmann 1998). As a consequence of these measures, a process of hidden immigration of Italians to the province of Bozen took place. In the decade between 1946 and 1955, about 26.000 Italians “immigrated” to South Tyrol; even if about 18.000 others left the province in the same time, a net positive immigration took place which increased the local Italian population by about 10.000 persons (Obkircher 199, p. 20). The consequence was that among the German-speaking South Tyroleans, an increasing displeasure and unrest was spreading, culminating in the parole of the “*Death March*” of the (German-speaking) South Tyroleans.¹¹ This parole meant that the industrial and population policy of post-war Italy in the long-term would have the same consequence of that of fascism, namely to make the German-speaking population of South Tyrol a minority in its own inherited territorium. The culmination of unrest among the German speaking South Tyroleans was the “Fire Night” when in the night of 11./12. June 1961 – the day of the “Heart of Jesus”, the patron of South Tyrol – during several hours dozens of pylons of power lines around Bolzano and in other places were blast – filling the whole valley basin of Bozen for hours with a horrific crash. This outbreak of ethnic violence shook up whole Italy, leading to an image of South Tyrol as a terroristic region, an enemy of the state, which soon was filled with about 45.000 soldiers and policemen from all over Italy (Widmann 1998:580). They controlled fiercely public buildings, the borders to Austria and any suspicious person and group in the province, and treated very harshly (even torturing some of them) all those South Tyroleans who were convicted of participation in the terrorist attacks.

The following decades, however, brought a positive turn in socio-economic and political development. First, the leading political party of South Tyroleans, the *Südtiroler Volkspartei*, changed its economic and industrial policy which up to now was characterized by a rather defensive stance against the establishment of industrial plants. (It was feared that the development of such plants would mainly attract Italian workers from other provinces). It began to support the decentralized establishment of small and medium-sized handicrafts and industries, whereby possibilities for work could be created in smaller towns and larger rural communes without the necessity of a strong urbanisation. In this way, and also due to a strong development of tourism (fostered on its side by rising incomes in Austria, Germany, but also South Tyrol itself), South Tyrolean economy recovered in the Seventies and began to develop in a very dynamic way. Also agriculture profited

from the rising demand of the towns and the tourism services and could withstand a decline which could be observed in many other Alpine regions.

Second, as a political consequence of the outburst of ethnic violence, the Italian government was ready to enter into serious negotiations with the German-speaking South Tyroleans about their demand for local provincial autonomy – a demand which was strongly supported by Austria and its then foreign minister Bruno Kreisky. He brought the South Tyrolean issue – against strong resistance from the side of Italy – before the forum of the United Nations. So, in 1972 the second Statute of Autonomy¹² could be passed which gave many important rights to the local parliament and government of South Tyrol, now independent from the formerly autonomus region Trentino-Alto Adige.

The situation of the two larger linguistic groups now began to change fundamentally. The obligation of the statute of autonomy foresaw that all public jobs and public apartments were distributed between the three linguistic groups (German, Italian and Rätoroman speaking) in the same proportions as their proportions among the populations were. Since the political autonomy of South Tyrol gave to the province the control of a wide range of areas, and provided it with an increasing income from central state funds, this meant particularly for the German speaking population thousands of new jobs in public administration and semipublic enterprises (such as postal services, railways etc.). For the Italian speaking population, however, the statute meant a significant deterioration of their hitherto privileged position. In addition, the Eighties brought with them an economic recession which led to an increase of unemployment by which the Italian speaking population, concentrated in larger industrial plants and in the provincial capital of Bozen/Bolzano, was hit considerably stronger than the other two groups. Correlated with this trend, the neofascist party MSI became the strongest party in the elections during the Eighties in Bozen/Bolzano, and a new series of terrorist attacks broke out, probably originating from extremist right-wing Italian groups. Thus, while ethnic conflicts and attacks of the first period were directed against the central state, now the ethnic conflict became more of an internal affair, directed from the “new” Italian speaking minority within South Tyrol against the German speaking majority. The late 1980ies and early 1990ies brought again an easing of ethnic tension. This was due, first, to an increasing improvement of the economic situation which led to practical full employment till the end of the century and, second, to an increasing recognition from the side of the Italian speaking population and their political leaders that the political autonomy of the province became also an advantage for them.¹³

Table 1: Population development in South Tyrol, (1910-) 1953-1991, by ethnic-linguistic groups

Year	German Speakers	Rätoroman speakers	Italian speakers	Total	(Absolute numbers)
1910 %	93,0	4,1	2,9	100	(237.825)
1921 %	83,9	4,3	11,7	99,9	(230.229)
1953 %	62,7	3,7	33,6	100	(341.521)
1961 %	62,2	3,4	34,3	99,9	(373.581)
1971 %	62,9	3,7	33,3	99,9	(413.566)
1981 %	64,9	4,1	28,7	99,7	(430.568)
1991 %	68,0*	4,4*	27,6*	100	(440.508)
2001 %	69,4	4,3	26,3	100	(462.999)
Changes between (in %)					
1953-61	+ 8,6	- 0,8	+11,0	+ 9,3	
1961-71	+11,9	+22,7	+ 7,4	+10,7	
1971-81	+ 7,3	+14,7	-10,3	+ 4,1	
1981-91	+ 4,0	+ 6,0	- 4,6	+ 2,3	
1991-01	+ 3,1	+ 1,6	- 3,0	+ 5,1	

Source: *Population Censuses*; ASTAT, *Statistische Jahrbücher für Südtirol* (annually); for 1991: ASTAT, 13. *Allgemeine Volkszählung 1991*, Bozen 1995, pp. 49, 73; for 2001: *Statistisches Jahrbuch für Südtirol* 203, p. 112-113.

Figures refer to the resident population (*Wohnbevölkerung/popolazione residente*)

* Without 12.910 persons who did not declare their belonging to one of the three linguistic groups.

If we look at the figures on the demographic development of the three linguistic groups over the postwar period, we can see these tendencies rather clearly. In the Fifties and Sixties, the size of the Italian speaking group increased both in absolute and in relative terms (in absolute numbers from 114.000 to 137.000). In the Seventies, however, a fundamental change took place: The first group decreased by not less than 10% (by about 15.000 in absolute numbers), while the German and Raetoroman groups could increase both their absolute numbers and proportions considerably.

Social structural consolidation and re-differentiation

As outlined in hypothesis 1b, there is a second aspect of socio-economic development which is an important determinant of the relations between ethnic groups, namely, the degree of consolidation or differentiation of the social and economic structure of a population or region. The more differentiated the different ethnic groups are in terms of education, occupational concentration, territorial dispersion and so on, the less probable is it that they feel contraposed to each other; the

less this is the case, and the more one-sided the economic and social structure of a group, the more it will feel that it has not only a specific identity, but also an incomplete and problematic social structure.

The latter situation was existing to a large degree among the ethnic groups in South Tyrol after Second World War. Two processes had contributed to this fact. One was the consequence of the "Option"; In this time, the German speaking South Tyroleans in the years 1939–43 were constrained to decide if they wanted to remain (to "opt" for) in Italy or to leave South Tyrol for other provinces in the "Reich" of Hitler. In this way, the two dictators, Hitler and Mussolini, wanted to "solve" the ethnic problem in South Tyrol once and forever. The persons, who left South Tyrol were mainly workers and employees, while most of the farmers remained in the country. The other fact was the huge immigration of Italians from other provinces to South Tyrol. Before First World War, South Tyrol in its present territorium had only a tiny minority of 3% Italian speaking persons (see Table 1). The immigration in the Twenties and Thirties, however, created a very one-sided socio-economic structure among the Italian group. Since immigration was mainly initiated by the massive industrialisation program in Bozen by the fascists, the immigrants worked mainly in the large-scale industry on the one side, and in public and semi-public services (such as the state railway, the post offices and the like) on the other side. Therefore, after Second World War, the German (including the Raetoroman) and the Italian populations in South Tyrol were nearly living in two different worlds: The first in the smaller towns and villages, many of them in rural areas, the latter living mainly in Bozen (and here, in the town district of Gries which became practically an Italian subtown) and a few other cities and places (including communes like Brenner and Franzensfeste where many public jobs were available). Connected with the different occupational and living concentration, the education of the Italian speaking population was considerably higher than that of the German and Raetoroman speaking population.

Table 2 shows some basic data on the occupational-sectoral distribution of the three ethnic-linguistic groups from 1961 to 1997.¹⁴ In the early Sixties, it is evident that the German speaking population is concentrated massively in agriculture (about 45% were working there); the next largest group is people working in small handicraft and service enterprises. Contrary to them, the Italian speaking population was concentrated in large industry and services and in the public services; here, around one fifth of all Italians in South Tyrol were employed. But already in 1971, the proportion of Germans in agriculture becoming is much smaller (about 30%), that in industry and services increased considerably; among the Italians, the proportion of those in private services increased, that in public services decreased. In the late Eighties and Nineties, the situation again looks very different. Farming is now a job for only a minority of the Germans (about 15%), but services have gained considerably; among Italians, the main trend is from (large scale) industry to services. Most remarkable is the fact that the proportion of persons in public services now is rather equal among the German and Italian speaking groups (23 versus 27%). This fact clearly reflects the opening of the public and semi-public

state services for the German speaking population, and the massive increase of public jobs in the autonomous provincial government in Bozen.

Table 2: The occupational-sectoral distribution of the active population in South Tyrol by ethnic-linguistic groups, 1961–1997

	1961			1971		
	German speakers %	Raetoroman speakers %	Italian speakers %	German speakers %	Raetoroman speakers %	Italian speakers %
Agriculture	44,8	37,9	4,2	29,9	20,6	2,7
Industry	20,9	33,5	40,6	26,9	29,3	36,6
Handcrafts, private services	30,8	25,3	34,9	39,9	46,4	44,1
Public services	3,5	3,3	20,3	3,3	3,7	16,6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(99.626)	(5.426)	(54.959)	(95.705)	(5.511)	(52.605)

	1986			1997	
	German speakers %	Italian speaker %		German speakers %	Italian speakers %
Self-employed farmers	15,9	2,1	Agriculture	15	1
Other self-employed	21,5	23,6	Industry, crafts	24	14
Blue-collar workers	34,9	29,2	Trade, traffic, tourism	32	34
Private Employees	12,5	17,4	Other services	29	51
Public employees	5,2	27,0	(Public service)	(23)	(27)
Total	100	100		100	100
(N)	(478)	(222)		(432)	(187)

Sources: 1961, 1971: *Census results*, as quoted in Obkircher 1998, p. 37; 1986: *Social Survey 1986* (ASTAT 1988, p. 183); 1997: *Social Survey 1997* (ASTAT 2000, p. 19).

Let us come to a conclusion concerning the relation between socioeconomic development and ethnic tensions in South Tyrol since World War II. In the aforementioned diploma thesis, Raimund Obkircher (1999, p. 159) has given a nice schematic-stylized interpretation of the relation between economic development and ethnic tensions in South Tyrol 1945–1999. As sketched out in my overview, economic growth and prosperity or crisis on the one side and ethnic tensions on the other side were in fact closely correlated with each other. In both phases when serious economic problems emerged – from the mid-Fifties till the late Sixties, and again during the Eighties – also ethnic tensions increased. Yet, I would doubt a

little bit the suggestion that there existed a direct causal connection between the two processes. First, it seems to me that in economic terms the situation in South Tyrol has never become so bad as it is depicted in the graph. Even in the late Eighties, when unemployment with about 5% was highest in South Tyrol, it never reached the level of the adjacent Italian provinces (7–8%) or of Italy as a whole (12%; see Obkircher 1999, p. 115). Second, I think that the outburst of ethnic violence of the early Sixties cannot be equated simply with the terrorist attacks of the Eighties. The former in some way can be considered as a true mass-based, ethnic-national uprising, involving dozens, if not hundreds of men, many of them idealistic and from simple, farm origins. The bomb attacks of the Seventies and Eighties, however, were carried through by “professional terrorists” as they operate since decades in Northern Ireland or the Bask country. A significant difference between the two is the fact that the first wave of attacks was directed only against material infrastructure and symbolic objects (such as monuments of fascist and other Italian personalities, power lines etc.), but in the second also against persons.

4. From suppression and granting of pure existence to full recognition. The relevance of social factors and political personalities

Economic problems and unemployment, or a one-sided socio-economic distribution (exhibiting the characteristics of a “consolidated social structure”) alone could never explain the violent outburst of ethnic conflicts in South Tyrol in the late Fifties, early Sixties. There are many regions and groups in Europe which experience a sharp economic and demographic decline; there are also groups who are strongly concentrated in specific areas of work, geographic territories, but do not resort to political violence to improve their lot. Even in the case of South Tyrol in the late Fifties, political unrest and violence was – at least in the long run – no necessary or unavoidable reaction to improve the economic situation. It is true – as Italian governments of the time stated again and again – that the German speaking minority in South Tyrol had some degree of autonomy, that the preservation of its language was not in direct threat although its use in public spaces was inhibited. Access to public services was not wholly impossible for German speaking South Tyroleans. It might supposed that many young South Tyroleans emigrated to Austria, Germany and Switzerland not primarily because of a lack of job opportunities in South Tyrol, but mainly because the wages paid by public and semi-public enterprises (such as the postal and railway services) in Italy were lower than those they could get in private enterprises in Germany and other prosperous countries that badly needed manpower. Moreover, the getting up of the economic miracle in Germany and the strong increase of tourism sooner or later would have contributed to the solution of the problems of employment in South Tyrol. Thus, we have to look for some other or at least some additional reasons for the outbreak of violent ethnic conflicts in South Tyrol in the early 1960ies.

These reasons, in my opinion, must clearly be sought in the lack of recognition of the German speaking minority in South Tyrol as a distinct sociocultural group of its own. This is one of the main necessities of social life of any individual and social group: To be recognized by other groups in society, and in particular by the dominant groups and the state, as having one's own identity, and full rights not only of existence, but of developing one's own ways of life, one's culture and so forth.

In 1946, the famous Gruber-Degasperi treaty was signed by the foreign ministers of Austria and Italy in Paris, foreseeing for the province of Trentino-Südtirol considerable political and cultural autonomy (Steurer 1998). Yet, from the viewpoint of the German speaking South Tyroleans, this contract soon turned out as being a Trojan horse: South Tyrol was united with the province of Trento in an autonomous region. In the region with about 730.000 inhabitants, the Italian speaking population had a clear majority (210.000 German speaking South Tyroleans compared to 520.000 Italians in the provinces of Trento and Bolzano/Bozen). The German speaking representatives in the regional parliament in Trento, however, were always in a minority; they had only 15 deputies compared with 48 deputies of the Italian speaking group (Widmann 1998:10). Even this fact per se would not have made unavoidable the outbreak of an ethnic conflict. It would have well been possible that the Italian speaking majority had respected the rights of the German speaking South Tyroleans in their specific concerns. Yet, this was not the case and it is here, that the role of individual political personalities comes in. From the viewpoint of a state population, political elites and leaders play a crucial role: The legitimacy of an existing political system rests to a large degree on the individual personalities that represent that system. A highly respected leader can provide invaluable symbolic legitimacy and emotional support to a whole political system;¹⁵ a leader who is not respected, or even feared by his subject citizens, can induce massive political unrest, and even revolutionary turmoils. It is my thesis that both such types of leading political personalities have played crucial roles in the post-war history of South Tyrol, both in escalating the ethnic-national conflict, and in its final solution in the new autonomy granted to the province of South Tyrol alone. Due to reasons of time, I can only provide here a very short sketch of two important political actors.

One of the decisive political actors at the side of Italy was the head of the Italian government in 1945–1953, **Alcide Degasperi**. This politician, originating from a catholic family in Trentino, was already a deputy in the Austrian Reichstag in Vienna during the last years of the monarchy. After First World War, he founded the Italian catholic People's Party, and, after the Second World War, the long-governing party *Democrazia Cristiana*. As head of the Italian government, he was one of the most important West European leaders asking for a uniting of Europe, and was decorated with the Aachener Karlspreis in 1952. There are some other sides of this highly respected European political leader as well, however. One were his doubtful methods of excluding the communists from the government and of securing his own re-election.¹⁶ The other aspect, which is of interest here, is his position concerning the granting of full political and cultural autonomy to the German speaking minority in South Tyrol. There is no doubt that he was a strong opponent

of such an autonomy. It was his government, which in 1948 included article 117 in the new constitution of the Italian Republic which extended the political autonomy for the South Tyroleans, negotiated by in the Gruber-Degasperi treaty of Paris, to the whole region Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol (Widmann 1998:55). This was no accident. Already in 1921, Degasperi had approved Mussolini's aim of italianising the province of Bozen. After Second World War, as Italian's prime minister, he did all that he could do to define the case of the German speaking minority in South Tyrol as a pure internal problem of Italy. He convinced British and American governments – which favoured a referendum about the remaining of South Tyrol with Italy or its return to Austria – that the political and cultural autonomy of the province was secured, and that the Italian speaking majority of the province did not lack any rights. In a recent, informative book on the post-war history of South Tyrol, Franz Widmann (1998:203) has characterized Degasperi (his judgement has surely been one-sided somewhat since he was one of the new generation of politicians around Magnago who fought for the aim “Off from Trento”) as a person with two souls in his breast: Being an autonomist in the times of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, he soon turned into an Italian and Trentino-Irrendentist who had an old antipathy against the German speaking South Tyroleans and was happy that the old political unit of Tyrol had been broken down after First World War. Such a stance is rather surprising from the view of a person who fought in the monarchy for the granting of political autonomy to the then Italian-speaking minority of Trento¹⁷ within the large *Bundesland* Tirol. He must have known the facts much better than any other Italian politician outside the region and province. In his memoranda for the foreign ministers, Degasperi denigrated the South Tyroleans as strong supporters of National Socialism before and during World War II in order to support his arguments. Thus, the position and actions of this highly influential political top leader of Italy paved the way for the stance and behaviour of many other leading Italian politicians of the time, including later premiers and foreign ministers. Among them were local political leaders, such as the longstanding head of the regional government of Trentino-Alto Adige, Tullio Odorizzi, a fanatic fighter against an autonomy for South Tyrol, not to speak of the neofascist leaders of the MSI of the province of Bolzano, like Andrea Mitolo and others.

The history of the negotiations between the central Roman authorities and the governments of the region Trentino-Alto Adige on the one side, and the leaders of the German speaking South Tyroleans on the other side from 1945 till the early Sixties is full of reports about harsh disappointments of the latter. Their relatively moderate aims of gaining basic political autonomy for the province – such as the control of immigration, the use of German in public offices and services, public housing etc. – were obstructed in all possible ways. This series of disappointments strongly contributed to the rise of an unrest, embitterment and anger which led even many foreign commentators in respected newspapers (such the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* and others), to warn before a violent outbreak of the ethnic tensions in South Tyrol in the late Fifties. In some regards it was certainly the economic situation, and the fact that South Tyroleans could not take

their full part in public services, public housing programs etc. which led to their unrest. This unrest was stirred up, however, in large measure also by the behaviour of the Italian politicians which strongly deepened mistrust against their fellow politicians among the German speaking minority.

In such a situation, South Tyrolean politicians had an extremely difficult time and even more so after the outbreak of violence from the late Fifties on. On the one side, they could not take a very radical position against the central state authorities since this would have provided these with ammunition for accusing them of state-threatening secession attempts. On the other side, they had to consider the deep feelings of unrest among their own German speaking South Tyrolean population. The drama of postwar South Tyrolean politics, in this regard, includes also a fight within the political elites and representatives of the German speaking minority itself. The first group of leaders of the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP) – men like Otto von Guggenberg, Karl Tinzl, Erich Amonn and others – followed a kind of “appeasement politics.” They accepted the existing situation – the autonomy for the whole province – but tried to achieve many small improvements by continuous negotiations. Since the failure of this kind of politics became more and more evident, a new group of more determinate political leaders formed itself, and came to power in the General Assembly of the SVP of 1957. This group included men like Alfons Benedikter, Hans Dietl, Friedl-Volgger and others. The undisputed leader among them was “the men from Castelfirmiano” (Agostini 1986, p. 159ff.), *Silvius Magnago*, a person who had personal affiliations to all relevant groups: To the old Habsburg monarchy (his father was a public servant in the province of Trentino), to the Italians (his father was Italian speaking) and to the South Tyroleans (a German speaking mother). His charisma was enforced by the fact that he had lost one of his legs in World War II and was an excellent and charismatic speaker. It was Magnago who combined in his person characteristics which were decisive in such a situation: To exude personal trustworthiness, but also self-consciousness and determination in the pursuing of the important political aims. At the same time he was thrustworthy also in the eyes of the political adversary, the Italian speaking population of Trentino-Alto Adige and the leading political elites of Italian governments in Rome. Magnago did not succeed in his aims from the beginning, but he had to fight for years within and outside his party. His virtues showed for the first time at the great demonstration at the castle of *Sigmundskron* in 1957, when about 35.000 persons from all over South Tyrol proposed the parole “*Off from Trento*” (“*Los von Trient*”; rather than using this large assembly as a forum for a radical and much-applauded speech, Magnago made clear that his aim was clearly restricted as that of gaining political and cultural autonomy for the province of South Tyrol within the existing state borders. I think that the contemporary witness Franz Widmann (1998:411) is right when he states that without the “immense powers of self-assertion and the strong nerves” of this man the departure for the “*Off from Trento*” could have had quite a different, less happy end.

5. The relevance of catholic religion

Due to reasons of space, I can give only a few hints concerning the relevance of the factors mentioned in hypotheses 3 and 4, that is the dimensions of religion and political constitution.

As far as religion is concerned, it might seem that this factor did not play any role in the South Tyrolean conflict. My hypothesis was that there should have been no violent outbreak of conflicts at all in South Tyrol since all minority groups and the state belong to the common religion, Catholicism, and this religion cannot be accused of having a particular aggressive ideology. Yet, I would argue that religion did play an important role, even if this role was effective more in the background.

First, let us look at the role of some of the important political personalities discussed earlier. A case at first sight contrary to my hypothesis is that of Alcide DeGasperi, the Trento-born leading Italian politician of the immediate post-war years. How can we understand the paradox fact that this highly religious personality played such an ambivalent or even negative role? Two times he founded the Italian catholic peoples party, and since some years, there has even a process of his beatification been initiated – but from the viewpoint of many German speaking South Tyroleans was seen as a traitor of their true and fundamental rights of political and cultural self-determination? I think we can understand this only by considering some other, less positive sides of catholic thinking and doctrines, namely, its conservative-patriarchal, in some regards even authoritarian character. So, the religious dogmatic teaching in catholicism is strongly controlled by central authorities in the Vatican, and the catholic church as a whole is characterized by a very clear, strong and rigid hierarchy. In both regards, protestantism might be considered as being much more “democratic” since it grants to the individual believers much more rights in interpreting the bible in its relevance for everyday life and in the responsibility for gaining the eternal salvation. From this point of view, I think that it is no accident that the oldest democracies of the Western world (England, United States of America) are protestant and that fascism in the Twenties of the last centuries first came to a breakthrough mainly in the Catholic countries of Europe, such as Italy, Austria, and Spain.¹⁸

Religion has doubtless played a significant role also for the South Tyroleans fighting for gaining more political and cultural autonomy. Their deep-rooted mistrust against the central Italian state authorities was based on the historical remembrance of the attempt of Italian fascism to eliminate any element of German culture and language from South Tyrol. Such a brutal attempt could only be made by a fundamentally atheistic regime. In fact, fascism was – even if it did not show openly this characteristic in the 99%-catholic Italy – an ideology which could only have contempt for a code of ethics which prayed altruism, charity and trust in god, instead of the fascist principle of relying on violence and power and the Darwinian principle of the self-assertion and survival of the strongest. It is no accident, therefore, that the most decisive resistance against this attack came from catholic groups in South Tyrol, which the already mentioned Monsignore Michael Gamper as the leader.¹⁹ Also among the first wave of terrorists, the initiators of the

“Fire Night” of 1961, some of the leading personalities were strongly committed Catholics. We can mention here as an example Sepp Kerschbaumer, a quite religious farmer from Frangart (south of Bozen) who first worked actively within the SVP for a more radical stance against the state, then participated in the first round of terrorism and – after his incarceration in the sequel of the “*Feuernacht*” – died in prison.

A third factor which has to be considered in the role which religion played in the ethnic conflict in South Tyrol is the fact that the Italian speaking population of South Tyrol is composed rather heterogeneously in terms of regional origin. First, nearly 90% of the ancestors of them had been immigrated to the province only during the last century; even today, there is a considerable amount of immigration and emigration of Italians from the province of Bozen to other Italian provinces,²⁰ thus producing a relatively high level of demographic heterogeneity of this group. From this point of view, the Italians living in Bolzano and in other towns of South Tyrol today, have not been profoundly influenced by the “Alpine culture” (Demarchi 1968) which, to a certain degree, was common to both the German and Italian speaking populations of Tyrol and the Trentino. An indicator of this is the fact that the level of religiosity is much lower among the Italian speaking population of South Tyrol than among the German speaking, even controlling for the different regional concentration of the two groups (Haller 1988, p. 191). The relatively heterogeneous composition of the Italian speaking population of South Tyrol is also one of the factors which might explain their internal political divisions; normally, many different parties get votes from the Italian speaking citizens, which is a high level of splitting compared with the high degree of closeness of the German speaking group where the SVP usually gets the largest share of all votes. This is a fact which was also quite important for understanding the success of the request for political autonomy.

6. Conclusions

Let us try to arrive at some general conclusions concerning the role of the different determinants of ethnic tensions and conflicts.

First, I hope that the general thesis proposed here has been made plausible, namely, that economic development and prosperity is an important determinant of the intensity of ethnic conflicts, but by far not the only one. In the case of South Tyrol, the ethnic conflict from the Sixties till the Eighties was to a large degree also a fight for the recognition of the fundamental rights of the German speaking minority, not only in terms of equal employment and housing opportunities, but also in terms of the full recognition of their language and culture. Also for the “new minority” of the Italian speaking population within South Tyrol from the Seventies on, it was a “fight for existence” in the sense that they feared – as the South Tyroleans did during Fascism and again in the late Fifties and early Sixties – that they would be diminished strongly in demographic terms and reduced in political influence.

Table 3: Attitudes toward the living together of the ethnic-linguistic groups and toward the relevance of the political autonomy in South Tyrol by ethnic groups, 1991 and 1997

1991	German speakers %	Italian speakers %	Raetoroman speakers %
The fact that in South Tyrol there exist several linguistic-ethnic groups is ...			
... a cultural asset that must be estimated highly and has to be preserved in any case	32,4	39,3	65,1
... something which – under specific conditions – could represent a cultural asset	17,7	32,8	12,4
... a fact with which one must cope	41,2	9,3	14,2
... we all would live better without this ethnic differentiation	8,7	18,6	8,4
1997	German speakers	Italian speakers	Raetoroman speakers
	% of positive answers		
The proportional representation (Proporz) contributes to the peaceful living together	86	54	81
European integration renders the proportional representation superfluous	30	81	34
The political autonomy benefits also the Italians in South Tyrol	92	77	93

Sources: 1991: ASTAT-Survey, as quoted by Zappe 1996, p. 115; 1997: Social Survey 1997, ASTAT 2000, p. 79. IN both cases, representative population surveys have been carried out.

Today, all three ethnic-linguistic groups in South Tyrol can be rather sure that their fundamental economic, social and cultural rights are respected. A major factor contributed to this positive situation are also two political developments of the last decades: The increasing readiness of the Italian governments, to grant more autonomy to its regions; and the integration of Europe wherein Italy has played an active role since the beginning. It is unconceivable that a member state of the European Union would withhold fundamental socio-economic and cultural rights from one of its national minorities. Thus, the central issues facing South Tyrol in the 21st century will be quite different from those it faced in the Twentieth Century. They will relate to problems which are relevant for many other advanced Western societies: How to face the fertility decline and the rising proportions of old-aged people; how to cope with the necessary immigration and the integration of immigrants; how to preserve

the environment and landscape in one of the prime tourist regions in Europe, which is endangered severely by massive transit traffic; but, finally, also how to strengthen democratic participation within the autonomous province, given the vast political competencies and financial means the province now has at its disposal.

Max Haller

Südtirol – Eine ökonomische oder politische Erfolgsstory?

Es scheint offenkundig zu sein, dass ethnisch-nationale Konflikte mit der wirtschaftlichen Lage einer Minderheit zusammenhängen und stärker werden, wenn es ihr wirtschaftlich schlecht geht. Die Entwicklung in Südtirol scheint diese These deutlich zu belegen: Die Konflikte brachen aus in den 60er und 70er Jahren, als noch Tausende von deutschsprachigen Südtirolern auswanderten; die Situation beruhigte sich jedoch gegen Ende des Jahrhunderts, als die wirtschaftliche Situation immer besser wurde. Trotzdem zeigt die Geschichte, dass gesellschaftliche Konflikte oft nicht in Phasen des wirtschaftlichen Niedergangs, sondern des Wachstums ausbrechen, oder dass nicht wirtschaftlich benachteiligte, sondern starke Regionen um mehr Autonomie kämpfen. Der Beitrag versucht zu belegen, dass auch in Südtirol neben dem Wirtschaftswachstum andere Faktoren wichtig waren und dazu beitrugen, dass sich das Land zu einem Modellfall für die erfolgreiche Lösung eines interethnischen Konfliktes entwickeln konnte.

Im Einzelnen werden die folgenden Hypothesen entwickelt und mit empirischem Material belegt: (1) Ethnische Spannungen werden besonders dann stark, wenn sich eine Tendenz zur Herausbildung einer „konsolidierten Sozialstruktur“ zeigt, d.h., die Minderheiten in mehreren Merkmalen (wirtschaftlich, beruflich, sprachlich, religiös) von der Mehrheit differenziert sind; dies war in der Nachkriegszeit viel stärker der Fall als später. (2) Die Anerkennung der deutschsprachigen Minderheit durch den Staat Italien wurde erst im Laufe der Jahrzehnte erreicht; später geriet allerdings die italienische Sprachgruppe innerhalb von Südtirol in eine Minderheitsposition, was seinerseits zu neuen Ängsten führte; in diesem Zusammenhang spielen auch herausragende politische Führer eine wichtige Rolle; behandelt wird jene von Alcide De Gasperi und Silvius Magnago, wobei der erstere eher eine negative, der letztere eine wichtige positive Rolle spielte. (3) Die kulturelle Distanz bzw. Nähe zwischen Mehrheit und Minderheit ist wichtig; im Falle Südtirols stellte der Katholizismus eine gemeinsame Basis dar. (4) Die starke politische Zentralisierung Italiens in der Nachkriegszeit erschwerte die Lösung des Konflikts, Schritte zur Regionalisierung reduzierten dieses Problem, ebenso wie die frühe Einbindung Italiens in den Prozess der europäischen Integration. (5) Die friedliche Lösung des Konflikts förderte ihrerseits das Vertrauen zwischen den Volksgruppen, Wirtschaftswachstum und soziale Integration.

Alto Adige-Südtirol: una “storia vincente” economica o politica?

Sembra un'idea abbastanza diffusa che i conflitti etnico-nazionali siano in relazione con la situazione economica di una minoranza e che essi si inaspriscano se quest'ultima è economicamente in crisi. Gli sviluppi della situazione sudtirolese sembrano confermare questa tesi: i conflitti esplosero negli anni Sessanta e Settanta, quando ancora migliaia di sudtirolesi erano costretti ad emigrare; la tensione è andata attenuandosi verso la fine del secolo, in corrispondenza al progressivo miglioramento della situazione economica.

Tuttavia la storia dimostra che i conflitti sociali esplodono spesso non in fasi di depressione economica bensì in quelle di crescita; essa mostra anche che non sono le regioni svantaggiate bensì quelle forti economicamente a combattere per una maggiore autonomia. Il contributo cerca di dimostrare che anche in Sudtirolo, accanto alla crescita economica, vi furono altri importanti fattori che contribuirono a fare di questa provincia un caso esemplare di soluzione di un conflitto inter-etnico.

In particolare vengono sviluppate le seguenti ipotesi, sostenute con materiale empirico:

- 1) Le tensioni etniche si acuiscono quando si rivela una tendenza alla genesi di una “struttura sociale consolidata”, cioè quando le minoranze sono differenziate dalla maggioranza sotto vari aspetti (economico, lavorativo, linguistico, religioso); ciò si adatta alla situazione del dopoguerra molto più che a quella successiva.
- 2) Il riconoscimento della minoranza di lingua tedesca da parte dello Stato italiano fu raggiunto solo nel corso dei decenni; in seguito il gruppo linguistico italiano si vide collocato in una posizione di “minoranza” all'interno della provincia, cosa che da parte sua portò a nuove paure; in questo contesto un ruolo importante fu svolto anche da leaders politici di particolare rilievo; viene affrontato il ruolo di Alcide De Gasperi e Silvius Magnago, di cui il primo è giudicato negativo e il secondo positivo.
- 3) E' importante la distanza o vicinanza culturale tra maggioranza e minoranza: nel caso dell'Alto Adige-Südtirol il cattolicesimo rappresentò una base comune.
- 4) Il forte centralismo che caratterizzò la politica italiana nel dopoguerra rese più difficile la soluzione del conflitto, mentre i passi verso il decentramento ridussero il problema, così come la precoce partecipazione dell'Italia al processo di integrazione europea.
- 5) La soluzione pacifica del conflitto favorì dal canto suo la fiducia tra i gruppi etnici, la crescita economica e l'integrazione sociale.

Notes

- 1 A first version of this contribution was presented as a lecture at the Summer Academy 2001 "Regions and Minorities in a Greater Europe", European Academy Bolzano/Bozen, September 14, 2001.
- 2 As at least a partial proof for this far-reaching hypothesis, we need only consider the fact that the dissolution of Yugoslavia (and of Czechoslovakia in the same vein) has not been the aim of the Slovene and Croatian leaders from the beginning. It was only a consequence of the repression of the Kosovo and the continuous attempts at undermining the federal system and the rights of the single states by the regime of Milosevic, that Slovenia and Croatia turned toward the separation from the state of Yugoslavia.
- 3 One of the few persons it mentioned to my knowledge was Alexander Langer in a lecture given at the University of Graz in the early Nineties.
- 4 Roman Catholicism, in this regard, may be placed today somewhere in the middle between Buddhism which is favouring mostly a peaceful settlement of conflicts, and modern Islam, which in its extreme variants still tends toward aggressiveness.
- 5 It is well known, that in the case of France this tendency led to the extinction of most local languages which were used in its territory a few centuries ago.
- 6 This fact can be observed in all regions of the world where long-lasting, bloody ethnic-national conflicts exist, such as in Northern Ireland, the Basque region, Palestine etc. In all these conflicts and regions, the majority of the population is strongly in favour of ending the conflict and finding a peaceful solution, but the active "fighters" for the minority, its independence etc. have developed vested interests in a continuation of the violent conflict which provides them with material, factual and symbolic prestige and power.
- 7 In this overview, I rely strongly on a new, very informative diploma thesis at the University of Innsbruck, written by the South Tyrolean Raimund Obkircher (supervisor: Günther Pallaver) with the title "Ethnic tensions and socioeconomic situation in South Tyrol 1945-1999" (in German).
- 8 I rely here on the works of Obkircher (1999, pp. 144ff.), Steininger (1999), Widmann (1998), Steurer (1998), Zappe (1996).
- 9 Among the most important of the technical means in agriculture was the introduction of the mowers (Mähmaschinen) which relieved farmers of one of their most heavy work and made this work much more efficient. A corollary of this was the increasing specialization of the farmers on specific products (e.g., dairy products, or vegetables etc.); this also reduced the need for manpower. Today, for instance, practically no wine or fruit farmer in the Southern regions of South Tyrol has cows so that his work can be done only by use of machines and – in times of harvesty – foreign workers hired for a restricted period of time.
- 10 Half of them, however, later came back – due both to an increasing prosperity of the South Tyrolean economy, and a decreasing labour demand in the German-speaking countries.
- 11 This parole was invented by the highly respected Monsignore Michael Gamper, one of the leading fighters against fascism and its policy of italianizing the territorium of South Tyrol by forcing the native German-speaking population to emigrate to other parts of Hitler's German Reich.
- 12 The first was that achieved by Gruber-Degasperi in 1946 which granted autonomy only to the region Trento-Bozen/Bolzano as a whole.
- 13 This thesis is proven by the fact that the financial transfers from the state and state-controlled incomes (such as customs duties) going to the province of South Tyrol are considerably larger than the transfers from the province (coming from taxes) to the state. This is a situation of net privilege of this region!
- 14 Due to the fact, that in the population censuses since 1981 the belonging to an ethnic-linguistic group is only collected separately from all other data, it is not more possible to compare the distributions of the two groups in occupational terms. We have to rely, for the later decades, on special surveys.
- 15 In the last decades of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, it was often said that the person of the old monarch, Kaiser Franz Joseph I, was one of the most decisive factors securing the unity of this highly complex and internally differentiated political empire. The tragedy was that this highly respected status of the monarch was due, not in the last instance, to his abstention from taking any open political stance, and in particular for his failure to find a new balance between the three large

- ethnic-national groups of the Germans, the Hungarians and the newly forming Slavic groups and countries within his empire.
- 16 In this regard, Degasper's attitudes and actions exhibit an astonishing similarity with that of another central figure in European postwar politics, the German chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Also this personality, whose merits are outside doubt, often took a rather ambivalent position when issues of internal democracy were at stake; also his government enacted laws against communists which were hardly compatible with democratic principles.
 - 17 The population of the province of Trento was rather loyal to the Habsburg dynasty, as was Degasper himself for some time!
 - 18 Germany, the country where Hitler and his National Socialism the most terrible fascist regime came to power, is divided between Catholicism and Protestantism. Yet, Hitler himself as well as some of his closest personal co-fighters (Göring, Gobbels etc.) came from an Austrian-South German catholic background. Moreover, German protestantism in many regards still has elements of catholic ideology.
 - 19 Again, the different stance of the simple clergy and the higher levels of catholic church in South Tyrol must be recognised; while the latter were quite ambivalent in their stance toward fascism and his suppression of German culture in Alto Adige, most of the lower clergy, the simple priests in the many small parishes, supported the resistance against it.
 - 20 See, for instance, ASTAT 1999, Statistisches Jahrbuch für Südtirol 1999, p. 92ff.

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am Institut für Soziologie der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz

Working Group „INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE SOCIAL RESEARCH“
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